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# THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE



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THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE  
AND OTHER POEMS





# THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

EMILY LAWLESS, LITT.D.

AUTHOR OF "WITH THE WILD GEESE," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY

EDITH SICHEL

PRIVATELY PRINTED

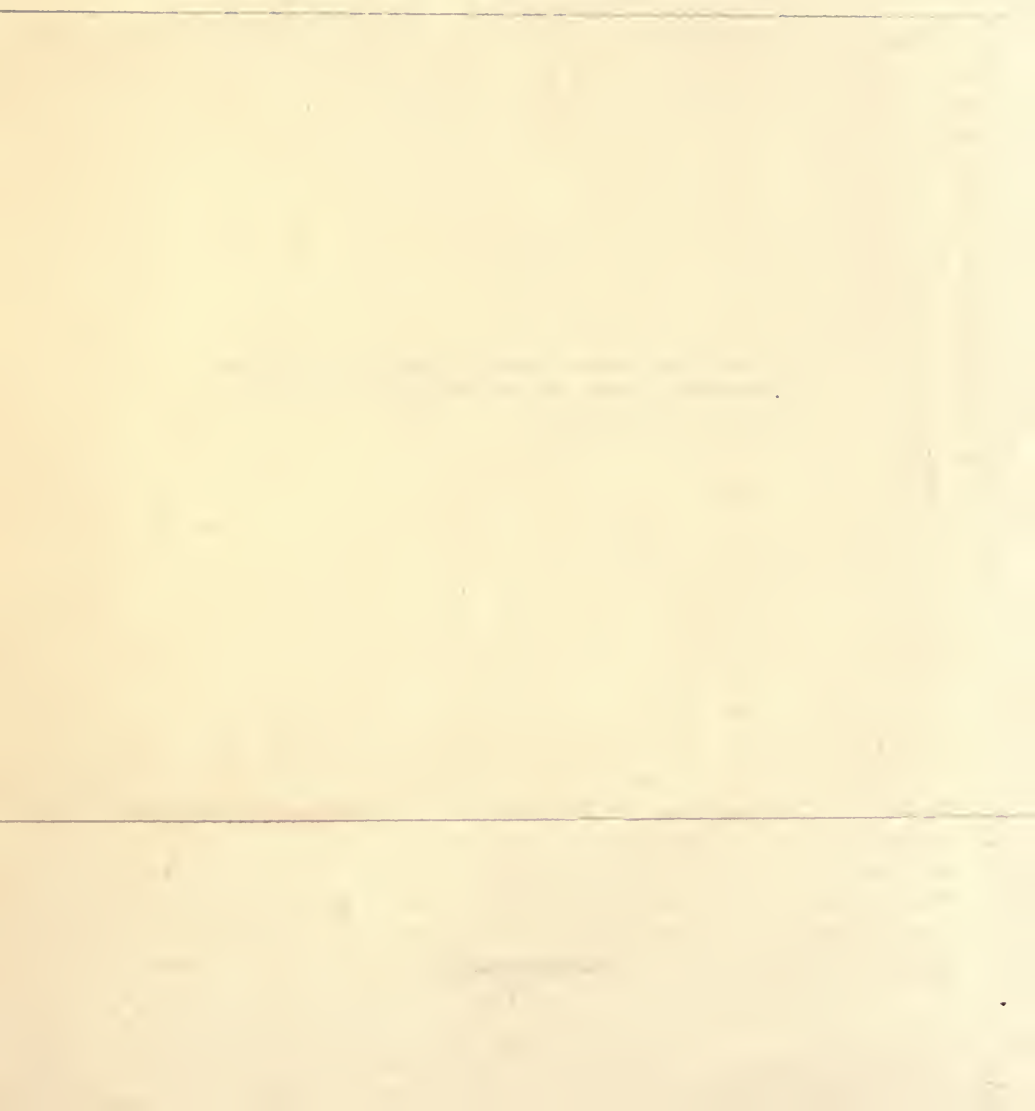
1914



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## PREFACE

EMILY LAWLESS was, before all else, a poet and a seeker after truth—and in her the two were one. Before all else, also, an Irish poet. There have been few women-poets of creative force in any nation—none in Ireland before her, whose fame has endured. And for Ireland she stands, in verse and in prose. In history, in romance, in “Hurrish” and in “Grania,” in “Essex in Ireland” and “With the Wild Geese,” she is part of Ireland’s past and of its present. She is haunted by the strange bewitching surge of the waves of the Atlantic, of the Western waves “wild with all regret.” For her the rolling brown stretches of bog and of peat-moss, with the blue smoke hanging low over them, and their carpet of faithful little peat-flowers, mean home, the enchanted home we all know, where we have played in childhood and felt the first thrills of youth; the moist silver sky, the solitary, ageless stone crosses, the ruined churches, the hovels, the sad, shining lakes make the country where her spirit dwells. It was to Irish Nature that her memory kept returning in the last years of pain and illness when her body could no longer revisit the shores for which she longed. Pictures of the well-known landscapes were always passing before her vision, clear and consoling to the end. Irish Nature was the Nature she knew best, and it inspired the last songs she gave us so gallantly, on the brink of death.

And Irish Nature was to her the symbol of all Nature, that Nature through which alone she faced mystery and found the Highest. She had in her poetry, as in herself, a twofold relation to Nature. There was the external aspect; the physical tie by which she became part of the earth and its teeming life; which made her in younger years adore movement—the rush through the air on a horse, the cleaving of the waves as she swam; which made her also a passionate naturalist, a moth-hunter who knew under which tree-root the grey moths lived, or where to stop the boat upon the sea and dredge for creatures unknown

even to the fishermen, or again, and more intimately, where there grew some humble lichen or rock-bloom, the search for which took days of patient adventure.

And then there was the inward relation to Nature, the wisdom and comfort she drew from it to heal the distressful mystery of life; the evidence she found in it of man's spirit, of a power, however baffled, which transcends material forces. She held to the brave companionship between Nature and the intellect—to those questionings and half-answers and silences which spur it onwards towards the unknown, towards "the untravelled land, where roams that stubborn bedouin man's soul."

Such are her three unfailing sources of inspiration—the visible pagan Nature of the senses, and the search into Nature which means science, and the search concerning Nature which means thought. All three sources prove her a poet rather intellectual than emotional, but tense, sincere and beautifully lucid. None knew better than she that true imagination is never vague, that true vision is more definite than chairs and tables, that memorable poetry is never blurred.

There is another region of her poetic art. It is one in which her intellect yields; in which she is simple and instructive and entirely Irish. When she writes her ballads and tells stories with a swing, a lilt, a sorrowful march-music of her own, she finds, perhaps, her most native self. The ballad of "Fontenoy," already almost a classic, the still more haunting "Dirge of the Munster Forest" vibrate with real life, move from within, transmit colour. Children can love them as well as critics. And to these will now be added the poem in this volume of verses which the poet herself liked the best of them: "The Third Trumpet," the tale of the girl who went at the risk of her life to fetch the proscribed priest to come to her dying mother, and of the old priest who came at still greater peril. To this power of not only telling but of implying a story, we also owe others among these new poems—in the "Eighteenth Century Echoes," less tragic, but swift in their interest and admirable in their compression, full of the same gifts that made their author a novelist of dramatic force and of virile directness.

Form was not Miss Lawless's strong point; that is when she sought it. When it found her, it was perfect, as in some of these poems in



“From the Burren,” verses of intuition. And certain metres that she loved she could master, like that of Meredith’s “Love in the Valley,” most musically followed in “Wide is the Shannon,” and in “A Bog-filled Valley.”

But in the poems of thought the verse is often but the scabbard for the finely tempered blade of the idea, and, as a rule, she needs the high pressure of a story to mould the rhythm for her. When we come to language, it is a different matter. Her words are always strong, melodious, distinguished, sometimes inspired, and the lines in one of her poems sound the unmistakable note of autobiography.

Who can say  
 On what poor, spent, and quite unhonoured brain  
 The pearly treasure of one spacious phrase,  
 Eight matchless words, worthy our dearest Keats,  
 May now and then alight, glow for a space,  
 And vanish, scarcely recognised while there,  
 And quite unguessed of by our sapient crowd?  
 At all events I who now speak to you  
 Would gladly—should some gracious power deign  
 (Say once or twice perchance in sixty years)  
 To make me the recipient of like gift,  
 And claim the promise—gladly would I vow  
 Here on my oath no mortal save myself  
 Should see, hear, aye or catch a rumour of it.

And Emily Lawless would have been capable of keeping that vow. The sincere love of poetry is a very purifying affection; her devotion to what was big made her big, and she showed a large humility where poetry was concerned—both in the way she accepted criticism from any one who cared, however insignificant, and in the modest place that she assigned to herself among singers. Notwithstanding, now and again she caught that “spacious phrase.” There are words, fragments, that run in our heads and make us wonder from which great poet they come, until we remember they are hers. They generally recall the Elizabethans, and the verse of the Elizabethans it was whose poetry most affected and most influenced her.

In one way these last poems have an especial distinction. They bear the marks of her struggle with bodily misery and marks of the victory she won. They are scarred, but they prove the final dominance of her mind. And although her lyrics of sleeplessness and suffering, such as "Night-Sounds" and "Resurgence," haunt the hearer with their poignant weariness, their waking nightmares, yet they bear in them a note of endurance which may well strengthen others in like stress; and a better note—the conviction of that deeper truth wrested from illness which the strong man misses. Few poets have sung about pain, and fewer still without preaching. To have done this is characteristic of Miss Lawless.

The best of her work will not perish with the "vanished argosies, and all the flotsam of unthrifty Time."<sup>1</sup> And it is to be hoped that one day her poems will be collected and given to the world together: those from "With the Wild Geese," and those from "The Point of View," the little volume printed for the benefit of the Galway fishermen, which contains so much of her intimate thought; as well as these latest songs which she herself desired should be privately published. She had just finished revising them when the pen dropped from her hand.

EDITH SICHEL.

<sup>1</sup> "The Point of View" ("Of the Value of Masterpieces").



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THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE



I

I

FROM this loud noise of passing things,  
These restless hours with ceaseless hum,  
To centuries which, like sleeping kings,  
Rest in the sun,

Turn we. Six hundred years twice told  
Of blood and power, tears and fame,  
Twelve hundred high-piled years have rolled  
In pride or shame,

Since those strong brothers of the cross  
A world deep-whelmed in strife and sin—  
High throned on power, sunk in loss—  
Set out to win.

The bitter, sanguinary lands  
Which most abhorred the Faith, they trod,  
And carried in their naked hands  
The gifts of God.

Oh, wide-armed power of certitude !  
All knowledge, wisdom, guile above !  
Wrapped in a two-fold amplitude  
Of faith and love,

They came, saw, won. No craft was there,  
No conquering sword, no armed appeal,  
Only a child's belief in prayer,  
And a child's zeal.

## THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

Unarmed, unlearned, yet simply wise,  
 Oh sandalled soldiers, brave and true,  
 A mighty continent still lies  
     In debt to you !

## II

From pastures deep in rain-fed grass,  
 From high, sea-smitten rocks austere,  
 As curlew, hern, and bittern pass,  
     So, year by year,

On tireless bleeding feet they trod  
 From Eiré to Imperial Rome,  
 Slept 'neath the stars; the breast of God  
     Their shield and home.

No devious track was theirs of fear,  
 The best-worn paths they loved to take,  
 Till Heaven itself seemed chiefly dear  
     For the world's sake.

And if at times their loud-pitched scree  
 Rasps on our subtler nerves to-day,  
 Certes an older, dreamier creed  
     Behind it lay.

The wind-shod myrmidons of sleep,  
 The dancers upon heath and fell,  
 The fluters of the woodland deep—  
     They knew these well.

For who those flutes would mark as clear,  
 Or note the fluters dancing by  
 As men who prayed, and lay in fear  
     'Neath a dark sky !

A sky thick-set with rustling wing,  
 An earth thrilled through with awful knell  
 Amid whose hollow toilings ring  
     Loud cries of hell.

With ancient terrors worse than death;  
Yet lit with lights beyond our ken;  
Stern burden for the fleeting breath  
Of short-lived men!

Yet no blind homage of a slave  
Was theirs—dark souls which cringe to live—  
To One they loved and served they gave  
As lovers give.

## III

Here, where a green and dripping land  
Mounts to the softly dappled skies,  
And the invasive careless hand  
Of change defies,

Still seem those brown-clad forms to roam,  
To musing pause, or dreaming stand,  
Lone lookers for another home  
Than this green land.

Grass-grown their ruined walls still top  
Yon bare, brown hill, yon bleak, grey shore,  
Half-fallen, titanic plinths still prop  
A low, bent door.

Or under shudderings of the wave,  
Which on some dripping threshold fall,  
Yawns wide a dark, surf-fashioned cave  
Where sea-mews call,

Where far and free the foam-bells fly,  
And round its roof their white orbs toss,  
Yet 'mid whose gleamings we descry  
Half-hewn a cross.

Or low-roofed cave above some lake  
To whose damp sides no sunbeams stray,  
Yet where entangled ripples wake  
Dim dreams of day,

## THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

In sheaves, in lines of dancing light,  
Thin watery streaks of broken green,  
Whose interlacings cheat the sight,  
Dying ere seen.

## IV

Oh ancient brother frank and true,  
Great-couraged; heart and conscience free;  
No cloistered pedant soul; in you  
A *man*, I see.

Large-natured, filled with primal joys,  
Young Earth's own greater soul, meseems,  
At home with death as ardent boys  
With hopes or dreams.

Serene in solitude. In crowds  
Austerely gay. Devoutly wise  
The large clear light of yonder clouds  
Shines through your eyes.

The tenets of your far-off home  
From high-famed land to land you spread,  
Nor to the might of mightiest Rome  
Bent that shorn head.

. . . . .

Across these wind-swept waves of Time  
Whose murmurings fill our listening ear,  
Old thoughts, old deeds befitting rhyme—  
*Yours* still shines clear.



## II

### YET WHEREFORE

YET wherefore was this early light,  
This glowing hope, this promise sent,  
If, ere 'twas even marked aright,  
It sank—it went?

We ask. But silence, grey, sedate,  
Cold answer proffers as is fit  
To questionings importunate,  
Devoid of wit.

Mere probings of the how and why,  
Poor words, scarce stronger than a moan,  
Yet answered, if at all, then by  
A God alone;

Who in the blade perceives the grain,  
And in dumb flesh the dreaming soul,  
Gathers the ends of joy and pain,  
The foreseen whole.

And yet we ask, why thus allowed  
This dawn, these hopes so fondly nursed,  
These nascent gifts so high endowed,  
Yet subtly cursed?

Cursed too by no mere vacant breath,  
No priestly ban, or seer's vain rhyme,  
Cursed by a doom as old as Death,  
As deep as Time;

## THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

Writ in some dull foreboding star,  
Which, hovering o'er man's little life,  
Diffuses poison from afar,  
    Cold hate, dull strife.

Oh, lost the goodly growing years!  
The years that shape a nation most!  
Wasted in faction, drowned in tears,  
    Lost, lost, all lost!

"Yet, stay!" some urge, "such words estrange,  
Hope's freer, happier spirit blights,  
Wisdom would take a larger range,  
    Climb loftier heights;

"What if the weeds your fields have marred,  
What if your barns show vacant floors,  
Are there not other lands unscarred,  
    Brighter than yours?"

"True," we reply, "on alien shores  
The weeds by hostile breezes sown  
Men all unmoved see round the doors,  
    *Not round their own!*

"Not on the long-loved homelands, where  
The child drew in its earliest breath,  
For which the old hearts cease to care  
    Only in death."

We hope, hope, hope; but whence, how brought,  
New light shall dawn, who may declare?  
We stumble on, too dark for thought,  
    Too dim for prayer.

"First last, last first," so ran the word;  
As dull and bent we slowly grope,  
Above us, like some song of bird,  
    Carols that hope.

“First last, last first,” our hearts repeat;  
An azure gleam invades the ground,  
As when—heaven breaking 'neath the feet—  
Bluebells are found.

As when, sore burdened, weary, we,  
With feet deep sunk in miry sod,  
Lift suddenly our eyes, and see  
The Hills of God.

Hoping we pass. In grief, in mirth,  
Like wind-torn clouds our days flit by,  
Thin shadows of a shadowy earth,  
And a pale sky.

We, and this land we tread, grow old,  
Its thoughts, loves, ways are strange and dark,  
Its ancient wrongs—a tale oft told—  
Men cease to mark.

Its future? Nay, enough, enough!  
See where the hills o'ertop the plains,  
So smooth and vast, so poor and rough,  
Man's lot remains!

Not long their light the motes retain,  
The chequered arrows, towering all,  
Kiss the loved gleam; then find it wane,  
And, turning, fall.

Striving we sink, fighting we fail,  
Stout soldiers in a losing cause,  
Out-fashioned knights whose ancient mail  
Breaks in new wars.

Follows the dark, and sleep is dear;  
Dearest to those, the Hope Forlorn,  
Who, having toiled, scarce wait to hear  
The notes of Dawn.

## THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

Who spent their day to heal the night,  
 Who sowed that other men might reap,  
 Whose simple guerdon is the right  
     Soundly to sleep.

Fetch laurels then, ye luckier swains,  
 Who in some later hour are born,  
 Whose barns brim over with the grains  
     These sowed in scorn !

Who, wandering through the Promised Land,  
 And noting how its ramparts fall,  
 Scarce heed where lies that earlier band,  
     Hard by the wall.

The men that fought, the men that failed,  
 The men that struggled through the night,  
 Remember !—Ye whose eyes have hailed  
     Their longed-for light.

Have seen it touch the smiling plain,  
 And waken every lake and rill,  
 Have watched its standards proudly gain  
     Hill after hill.

To you the prize, but theirs the praise,  
 Coequal heirs in one wild Past,  
 Spent mid the circles of a maze,  
     Now 'scaped at last !

Is *that* a dream? Ah! Who shall say  
 Save One whose name we do but guess,  
 Whose office—so we humbly pray—  
     Is to redress?

Whose coming? Nay, look up afar,  
 Through seas whose brineless waves immerse  
 The shores of that mysterious star  
     Our Universe.

## THE INALIENABLE HERITAGE

II

Behold a gleam. The end! The end!  
O, dream of dreams. O, hope immense,  
On which thought, heart, love, soul attend,  
All life, all sense!

Leave it close wrapped in silence, lest  
By some ill-omened note we mar  
A spell which, linking east to west,  
Binds star with star:

And sweeps in one all-mastering flood  
Ocean and rill to the same goal,  
Gathers the tides of ill and good,  
Completes the Whole.

With us meanwhile the rill still flows  
With us the little days speed fast  
And fast our changeful Present grows  
Our changeless Past.

Island of faith, of hope, of pain,  
Home of a thousand varying fears,  
See *you* no light beyond your rain?  
Across your tears?

Forbid it all the good, the strong,  
True friends, true lovers, grave or gay,  
Hatred and wrong endure for long,  
But not for aye.

And not for ever bare and brown  
The boughs despoiled by autumn swing,  
Time, which draws down the winter's frown,  
Restores the spring:

Brings comfort to the wreck-strewn strand,  
To men long pressed by evil, right,  
And to a weary, cloud-girt land  
At Evening, light.

1896.



“THE THIRD TRUMPET”

A BALLAD OF MEATH, MAY 1, 1654





## “ THE THIRD TRUMPET ”

A BALLAD OF MEATH, MAY I, 1654

(*After this Third Trumpet had been sounded no further grace  
was allowed to any Irish recusants*)

### PART I

CAN it be true this thing they say?  
That she and I beyond that day  
At home here may no longer stay?  
*Mary, queen of earth and sea,  
Dear Mary, have mercy on her and me!*

Since my father died six months are gone,  
Brothers and sisters have I none.  
My lady and I live here alone.  
*Castle towers, you are stout and tall,  
And the Boyne flows close to your outer wall!*

Thirteen winters hath she lain  
Pallet-held in woeful pain,  
Small hope she ever will rise again!  
*Mary, queen of earth and sea,  
Sweet Mary, look down upon her and me!*

. . . . .

Old Murrough swears they shall not in,  
But my lord is dead; our force is thin;  
More blood to spill methinks were sin.

Here 'neath our Trysting Oak, I weep.  
All round and round the grass rolls deep,  
Sweet Saints! How sound the cattle sleep!

## PART II

THEY took her down our twisted stair,  
Great their haste and scant their care,  
And laid her by the stairfoot there.

Quick and short was their task in truth,  
Yet might they, so meseems, in sooth  
To threescore years have shown some ruth !

Murrough, they took to our Trysting Tree,  
They hanged him there for all to see,  
He, who had nursed me on his knee !

Jolt, jolt, jolt, across the plain,  
They jolted us in wind and rain,  
Those jolts still beat inside my brain !

With eyes uplifted to the sky,  
Like some carved image did she lie,  
Betimes I hoped that she might die !

The third night out there came a sound  
Just as the dawn was stealing round,  
I crept towards her o'er the ground.

Out i' the straw she raised her head,  
" Daughter, a priest ! " was all she said,  
Then lay again as she were dead.

Sound, sound asleep lay half a score,  
I crept betwixt them, crossed the floor,  
And shortly gained the outer door.

No snood, no shoe I stayed to snatch ;  
The lintel all but touched the thatch  
As with great heed I raised the latch.

The plain spread all around me soon,  
Swathed and dim as in a swoon,  
To eastward slipped a young pale moon.

And close at hand a crooked lane  
'Twixt low thatched roofs all wet with rain,  
Nought else only the silent plain.

Four women. Was it fear or cold  
Made them so tremble? I grew bold  
And swiftly had mine errand told.

Three stared wild-eyed as at the dead,  
The fourth rose up; no word she said—  
She motioned to me with her head.

She led me on along the path  
To where it crossed a low brown rath,  
Then paused, and spake one word—"Soggarth!"

"Soggarth!" The word was like a spell,  
Sainted and sweet like some church bell,  
Lifting the soul to heaven from hell!

Rough were the stones and cold the ground,  
As swift I climbed that low brown mound,  
Then paused atop, and gazed around.

The rath spread round me brown and bare,  
Only a few sparse thorns grew there,  
No cross, no shrine, no sign of prayer.

Down to the earth like any stone  
Sudden I fell, and lay there prone,  
Heart-broken, desolate, alone!

And surely then I must have died,  
But scooped in the rath I spied,  
A low brown hole in its low brown side.

Brambles and briars, else was nought,  
Toothed were the thorns as I strove and wrought,  
With bleeding fingers toiled and fought.

Sudden they yielded, I espied,  
A hole wherein a man might hide,  
Tall stones there were on either side.

## 'THE THIRD TRUMPET'

And straight my lips gave forth a cry,  
 "Help! Or unshriven she'll surely die!"  
 There was no answer but a sigh.

Scooped in the great stone's dripping face,  
 Three feet or less about its space—  
 A deep dark, awesome, noisome place.

Yet for a surety one lay there,  
 Wrapped in black weeds of coarsest wear.  
 My knees knocked, and I breathed a prayer.

A priest! Most old, most worn, most frail,  
 With lint-white hair, and visage pale.  
 I fell on my knees, and told my tale.

He listened with a pitying face,  
 "God's hand," he said, "in this I trace.  
 Lead, daughter, lead me to the place."

I led him back across the rath,  
 The thorn-trees all but closed the path,  
 And once methought a sound—"Soggarth!"

I heeded not, and hurried by,  
 My soul afire lest she should die  
 Unshriven; help being now so nigh!

Cold and wide in open day  
 The plain spread under that narrow way,  
 We had all but reached the place where she lay—

When over me like a stream in flood,  
 There swept the thought that those men of blood  
 Would seize and slay him. So I stood.

And turning swiftly round I spake,  
 "Father, thy life they'll surely take!  
 Turn back, turn back, for Jesu's sake!"

He stood a moment silently,  
 Dimly he looked on earth and sky—  
 And said—"The times are good to die!"

PART III

BAD men, praise God, are not all bad,  
One day they gave me to be sad,  
Full knowing she was all I had !

The next they laid her in the ground  
To eastward of that low brown mound,  
Other small graves were there I found.

Then smoothed the sod, and walked away,  
I stayed a little while to pray,  
No mourner else had she that day.

Or so methought. There came a sound,  
My head I raised, and past the mound  
By twos and threes they crept around.

Oh poor kind hearts, hearts made of gold !  
Trembling, half-naked, bent, and old,  
Some young ; all starved with want or cold !

Barefooted, sick, mishabit, lame,  
At risk of their poor lives they came,  
Yet knew they not her very name !

We knelt together on the mound,  
Our muttered prayer scarce made a sound,  
The silence seemed to lap us round.

Above us, spread a soft blue sky  
The south-west wind stole softly by,  
It seemed a pleasant thing to die.

Yet fear for these gat hold of me,  
And I prayed them very earnestly  
To leave me, lest mishap might be.



## ' THE THIRD TRUMPET '

With dropping tears and soul on rack,  
I watched the last one leave the track,  
Then kissed the grave, and so went back.  
*Western lands, you are bleak and bare,  
Yet the grace of God comes everywhere.*

And now because her peace is deep  
Great peace to mine own heart doth creep,  
To stay, please God, till I too sleep.  
*Mary, mother, to whom we pray  
Keep east and west, the green and the grey.  
Both of them safe in thine arms this day,  
Now and for evermore I pray.*

FROM THE BURREN





I

LEAGUES upon leagues spread these sun-warmed rocks,  
 While over my head the breeze swept by,  
 Grey was it, all grey, yet a grey so clear  
 That it shone self-lit, like some half-veiled sky.  
 "Are you rocks, mere rocks, bald earth?" I asked.  
 "Nay some Titan for sure hath hitherward strayed,  
 Touched your tops with a god's own hand,  
 Over your surface some wild tune played;  
 Till suddenly, lo! no longer mere rocks,  
 Spawn of blind forces, dumb things of earth,  
 But Creatures of Vision, intent, high-planned  
 Hewn and shaped to a conscious birth.  
 See how a chisel hath plainly wrought!  
 Queen of the Arts, with her God-sent gift,  
 Sculpture herself hath been striving here  
 Spirit and senses alike to lift.  
 Or again, up yonder, grey height on height,  
 Tier above tier and no touch of soil,  
 Bastion on bastion, solidly planned,  
 Hewn, one dare swear, with a nation's toil,  
 Rightful resort for adventurous men,  
 See yon portcullis high-perched o'erhead,  
 From beneath which marched (can we doubt it?) of yore  
 Fierce fighting septs of a race long dead?"

Heathery, wine-flushed hills in the sun;  
 Mountainous peaks, bepinnaled, steep;  
 Vast domes, lost in a dream of snow;  
 Billowy downs, beloved of sheep;  
 Dear are you all, yet closer, more dear  
 Deep in some innermost pucker of soul,  
 Reign and will reign for me ever these grey hills,  
 Till coldly and gravely the last tides roll.

## II

No hint, no touch of grim utility,  
 Earth's busy functions sleep abandoned here;  
 Corn-grower, root-grower, nourisher of grain,  
 All are forgotten; nakedly austere.  
 Nought but herself, her inmost core, survives,  
 Stripped to the elements; enskyed and pure,  
 Remote, and stern, and coldly sanctified;  
 Pale as a ghost, yet rock-fast to endure.

And therefore, Burren hills, to me you seem  
 Shrines meet for that which is, and which is not;  
 Approach, beloved ones! Hasten! All is clear,  
 No bidding need you—you the unforgot!  
 The door stands open; only come, ah come;  
 Come from your far-off realms, with noiseless tread,  
 Come as you were, no dearer could you be—  
 The Loved, the Lost, the Sundered and the Dead!

Wide glistening pavements fit for ghostly feet,  
 Where never thought of mart or street intrude,  
 Only from ledge to ledge spent rain-drops drip,  
 And half-heard tinklings stir the solitude.  
 Imponderable wanderers! Shadowy all!  
 Ghost after ghost; half-veiled; grey muffled; while  
 With spirit-looks, visions seen in sleep,  
 Eyes seem to glimmer, lips austerely smile.

Again at dusk-time, or when moonbeams lie  
 Far on the sheeted silence, fold on fold;  
 Then with a swifter sequence, soft as light,  
 Life's semblances enwrap this shadowy cold.  
 Like autumn leaves, like high-borne clouds, they come  
 Strange shapes; and others, others, ah, *not* strange!  
 Not strange, God knows, but intimately dear,  
 Untouched by time, defiant of all change.

And therefore, Burren hills, grey Burren hills,  
Soul of fierce Clare, wild West of all our West,  
No mindless tract of earth or strand thou seem'st,  
Such as dull maps and solemn charts attest.  
Here 'mid your solitudes, as 'mid the crowds,  
Alike for me thou shinest, realm apart;  
Open to all we pine for, pray for, hope;  
Sanctified Home-land of th' unchanging heart.

III  
RESURGENCE

I

WHERE are ye, goblins of a while ago?  
Ill-health, dull gloom, Grief with its footsteps slow,  
Wry-visaged Pain, the bat-winged form of Care;  
Insomnia, whose accursed and cruel brood  
Fasten their horrid fangs in faithful Sleep,  
Burs of our life, whose hookèd talons creep  
Even to the very soul; whose unseen snare  
Besets our path, our bed, our toil, our food;  
Whose touch is madness, and whose poisoned breath  
Is worse than the hard clutch of fatal Death?

Behold they fly!  
Further and further yet they hie  
Past yon dry and ice-smooth grass  
Where the sculptured shadows pass;  
Where the bee, intent to steal,  
Catches with its small armed heel  
At those fairy palace wells,  
The purple lips of flower bells,  
Whose deep chalices hold fast  
Their strong-stored sweetness; till at last,  
The robber grown importunate,  
Teeth and hairy claws are set  
Full in the soft and damask sides  
Where the garnered treasure hides,  
And, the deed of daring done,  
With a loud triumphant hum  
Off the wingèd felon flies  
And to some fresh conquest hies.

Oh, pleasant things familiar long,  
 What magic doth to you belong?  
 What secret unpolluted wells,  
 What store of unexhausted spells?  
 Can your unruffled sweetness woo  
 My devious soul again to you,  
 Sweep from the years regret—how vain—  
 And give pure Bliss her own again?

Alas! the kindly magic palls,  
 Its spell dies off; even it recalls,  
 Even you recall the strain, the stress  
 Of life's consummate restlessness.  
 "Life, let it come in any guise,  
 Is life," we say, and over-wise  
 Our soul informs with its own hue  
 These tenants of th' ethereal blue.  
 We know you all too well, too long,  
 Your hues, your gambols, and your song;  
 You cannot think to cheat our eyes  
 With hope of any new surprise,  
 Your brightest shows, your deftest wiles  
 Are trite to us as oft-seen smiles  
 On some familiar face; as trite  
 As Time's unconquerable flight;  
 Trite as the cradle-songs which haunt  
 Some dying ear; trite as the chaunt  
 Of oft-heard thrush in garden shade;  
 Trite as the love to children paid;  
 Trite as the prayers whose rhythmic flow  
 Across unheeding memory go;  
 Trite as the very vital breath;  
 Aye, trite as Life, and trite as Death!

\* \* \* \* \*



## II

Ocean of Life! Mysterious ferry  
 Upon whose silent breast the barques  
 Flit swift and noiselessly; as sparks  
 Blown from magician's forge; as mote  
 Of city dust; as things which float  
 Deep down some ancient forest's shade,  
 Where, peering through its dusky glade,  
 Circles on circles eddying start,  
 And still the teeming atoms part  
 And meet, and part again, until  
 The thronging myriads crowding still  
 Seem to invest the brain—possess,  
 It with the sense of fruitlessness  
 Of fevered rush, of frenzied strain  
 Whose life is toil, whose end is pain.

Then off! small brother-elves, we say  
 Hence with your idle pranks, away!  
 Let rather silence obdurate,  
 Rock palaces, severe as fate,  
 Brown deserts, or the entrenchant gloom  
 Of vacant cities, which some doom  
 Leaves naked to the wolves; let them,  
 And such as they their spells essay;  
 So gloom on gloom its powers may try  
 In dull discordant rivalry,  
 Mates of the worm and tomb; not you  
 Gay playthings of the sun and wind,  
 Too long familiar and too kind.

Yet Life's warm garment closest clings  
 When most we strive to strip it; flings  
 Its mantle round us; ever tries  
 Fresh hues, fresh modes to tempt our eyes!  
 For listen, life of rock and hill,  
 Your secret is your secret still;  
 From yonder crag thin-peaked and grey,  
 Cold even in this noontide ray,  
 To yon bejewelled living thing,  
 Darting along on viewless wing,  
 From lichens fine as dryad's hair,  
 To cliffs high bathed in cloudless air,

From dust-speck to imperial sky  
 You all are strangers; and we die  
 And *never* know you. Full and free  
 You quaff the cup of mystery,  
 Of your own fate the only lord,  
 We see the scabbard, but the sword  
 Has never gleamed before our eyes;  
 Its hidden scrolls, its blazonries,  
 Are all to us as strange and new  
 As if nor we, nor they, nor you  
 Had in one lot a common share,  
 Or breathed the self-same vital air.

Launched on your pleasant dreamless tide  
 You sweep along, or fearless glide,  
 While we, with sobs of toil and pain  
 Struggle Discovery's heights to gain.  
 Till tip-toe on some peak we scan  
 The vast, the immeasurable plan,  
 Yet neither clue nor meaning find,  
 Till ever seeking, ever blind,  
 Caught by some 'whelming wave we roll,  
 To the same vast eternal goal.

## III

Yet Hope survives. And Hope is blest  
 Even when it fools us; loveliest, best  
 Of heaven's high brood; the hope to pluck  
 Something from out the void; to suck  
 Even from the heart of deep distress  
 That hidden secret which to guess  
 Were a long life's completest need;  
 That unseen root from whose small seed  
 Springs the young blossom of Content,  
 A flower oft grown on foreign soil,  
 Around whose hidden life-springs coil  
 Sorrow, and suffering, and death,  
 Sorrow and toil; whose very breath  
 Is blent with sighs; yet in whose breast  
 Still clings the magic perfume—Rest.

## RESURGENCE

And as in this far solitude  
Evening restores with her still mood  
Much that is lost and hid away  
Beneath the glamour of the day,  
So on the last remotest verge,  
Half-lost against the murmuring surge,  
'Midst hollow Ocean-voices heard,  
Steals floating in that mystic word,  
The word mistaught, misunderstood  
Whose half is "Ill," whose whole is "Good."  
The word whose magic stirs the seeds,  
And knits the stars, and links the creeds:  
A whisper, solemn, soft and low,  
Telling the thing we fain would know,  
Yet could not earlier; only now  
Now when the tense and busy brow  
Swims, and the hands fall pale and dead,  
And in a voice serene but dread  
Life's mystic sister, veiled and pale,  
Whispers the old, the unknown tale,  
Writ on some dim, mysterious scroll,  
Preludings of one magic whole.  
Yet, even while we strain to hear,  
Duller and duller grows the ear,  
Less and less clear the accents roll,  
Receding from the evanished soul,  
Darker, more dark, the shadows fall,  
Till grey-eyed Silence covers all.



## IV

### NIGHT SOUNDS

RUSH of fierce winds from sea  
Say in your flight have ye  
Never a word for me,  
    Threatening or kindly?  
Wet with wild scuds of rain,  
Drenching yon shivering pane,  
Threatening with might and main,  
    Blindly, most blindly.

Now like a child that cries,  
Now like scared bird that flies,  
Cowering 'neath angry skies,  
    Frantically wailing.  
Now, with a louder roar,  
Through chinks, up crazy floor,  
Ghosts of the sea and shore  
    Desperately railing.

Hark, 'tis a voice that calls!  
Sure some poor creature falls,  
Crushed amid iron walls,  
    Hopeless and drowning?  
Dying with help so nigh,  
Just one last anguished cry,  
Flung to a heartless sky,  
    Pitilessly scowling.

Forces of sea and land,  
Battling on either hand,  
Armed with one fixed command  
    "Die, Man, unhoping!"

## NIGHT SOUNDS

Unseen, unknown, unguessed,  
Blindly, from east to west  
Earth's lone bewildered guest  
Travels, still groping.

Blacker yet grows the night,  
Pierced with dull moans of fright,  
Mounting depths, lowered height  
Hollow; despairing;  
Up yonder unseen wall  
Sea-eyed the phantoms crawl,  
Ocean's vast caves are all  
Open and staring.

Toss and toss, turn and strain  
Sky, clouds, blank sky and rain!  
When can a man attain?  
Never, ah never!  
Hark, once more Atlantic rolls,  
Far out a fog-bell tolls,  
God keep all bewildered souls  
Here and for ever!

V

TO A HURRYING STREAMLET

NAY, little stream, why so swiftly go?

Past flowery clefts your hurrying waters flow  
Past birch and hawthorn, shimmering in the sun,

Past fern-filled tracts; on and on you run,  
To yon verge unseen. Ah, slower go!

Pause little stream. The Ocean lies below.

Short-lived thy course, short-lived will be thy dirge,

Short-lived thy sun-time, steep and dark the verge,  
Here redstarts flit, and sometimes thrushes sing,

On yonder marge the cormorant flaps his wing.  
Short course! Deep drop! Brave courage! Onward go;  
Drop little stream; the Ocean waits below.

## VI

### IS IT LOVE? IS IT HATE?

Is it Love, is it Hate, this clasp by the sea of the land,  
Entangling, swaying, revolving, escaping, past to the strand;  
Escaping, yet never escaped, never utterly gone from reach;  
Which is it? I ask and would know, as I watch at hand,  
Here on the beach.

To-night they seem weary of warfare, these ancient foes,  
Weary of love as of hate; of eddying kisses or blows;  
Even as we, as I, grow weary of eddying thought,  
Of the waves of the mind, of the soul and its foam-like woes,  
Rising unsought.

The sea's mood to-night has changed, has grown simple and mild  
It draws in the land to its breast as a nurse draws a child,  
It sings it a song wrought out of the moan of the beach,  
Of the sough of the wind, of the tales of the waste and the wild,  
Older and stranger than speech.

## VII

### A REPROACH

THE weltering anguish of a tortured land,  
A sky of lead, cumbered with mountainous clouds,  
Through which a moon steers, smiling as she goes,  
And—stretching to the void of distance—Thou  
Oldest of murderers! What ghastly croon,  
What dismal tale of past iniquities,  
What unremorseful dark soliloquy  
Moan'st thou and mutterest thus continually?  
Listen! There is a secret register  
Which in the hollow pause 'twixt wave and wave  
Records thy doings for unnumbered years;  
The treacherous tale of sudden summer gales;  
Of furious autumn; of black winter nights;  
Of man's first advent, man's harsh destiny,  
Of boding calms, and madly lashing storms,  
Of foundered ships, wild prayers, and drowning cries.  
That chronicle, dark tumbling one, is *thine!*

Well may'st thou groan and hourly lash thyself,  
Yet not for all thy lashings shalt thou 'scape,  
Nor shall thy myriad waters purge thy guilt.  
While she, thy dainty partner, up aloft,  
Pearly accomplice of a million crimes,  
From cloud to cloud steers on, how smiling!

VIII

TO A FORGOTTEN TRITON

TRIUMPHANT wielder of the wreathèd horns,  
Breeder and brewer of small midland storms,  
    Lord of a land-locked sea ;  
Plunged in this grey tumultuous brine,  
What fears, what thoughts, we ask, were thine,  
    What dreams would visit thee?

A minnow down some wild mill-race,  
A leaf, gale-tossed from place to place,  
    Might fitly image thee ;  
Some mild seer of the ancient world,  
Into our vexed thought-maelstrom hurled,  
    Would hear this deafening sea.

IX

TO THAT RARE AND DEEP-RED BURNET-MOTH ONLY  
TO BE MET WITH IN THE BURREN

SPARKLE of red on an iron floor,  
In the fiercest teeth of this gale's wild roar,  
What has brought thee, oh speck of fire,  
Speaking of love and the heart's desire,  
    To a land so dead?

Rocks gaunt and grim as the halls of Death,  
Sculptured and hewn by the wind's rough breath,  
Fortress-shaped, fantastic things,  
Reared for some turbulent race of Kings,  
    Kings long since dead.

Wind-blown pools where no herbs grow,  
Streams lost and sunk in the depths below,  
Where scant flowers bloom, where few birds sing,  
Thou, *thou* fliest alone, thou fire-winged thing!  
    Small speck of red!



## X

### A GARDEN

HIGH upon this bleak cliff where the wild wind dashes  
Grows that little garden which my soul loves best,  
Filled with flower faces, white, and blue, and yellow,  
Sheltered from the east wind, cradled by the west.  
Tossed against its limestone clings one pallid woodbine,  
Spreads the golden trefoil, waves the hair-bell tall,  
Gentians and saxifrage, pimpernel and eyebright,  
That little hollow rift finds room enough for all.

Close along its ledges cluster snowy dryas,  
Rose-like are the flowers, yet it clutches hard the rock,  
Claw-like its rootlets, roots like claws of sea-gulls,  
Scornful of the tempest, and proof 'gainst every shock.  
Campions fill the corners, careless little growers,  
Loved of the roving moth, which visits them at night;  
Under silvery leaflets round balloon-like blossoms  
Tumble in a tangled mat, mingled green and white.

Fierce cruel rifts spread around my garden,  
Slashed in the living rock, reaching far below.  
Through whose jagged hollows, narrow as a sword-cut,  
Ocean's mutter rises, ocean's currents flow.  
Smooth as the work of some famed and cunning sculptor,  
See yon cup hollowed, graven by the tide;  
Vacant now, yet wait till the waves returning landward  
Send the salt spray flying in a fountain far and wide.

Shyly at night shine the beams into my garden,  
Wavering threads of silver which glide along its rock,  
Glittering in the darkness, peeping all around it,  
Spreading high above it in a thin and misty flock.



Then, as their Lady climbs the silent heavens,  
Leaning closely downwards, peering from the height,  
Suddenly I spy how on one familiar blossom  
Like a star has gathered all that grey and moony light.

Dear to our hearts are the flowers of the spring-time,  
Lighters of our bleak months, breakers through the mould,  
Scilla and snowdrop, windflower and crocus,  
Brave little soldier-lads fearless of the cold!  
Gorgeous and glorious the roses of our June days,  
Solemn in its beauty the lily white and tall,  
Gracious the flowers which come to us in autumn,  
Yet the Rock-clan, the Rock-clan is dearest still of all!

Therefore little garden, garden all unheeded,  
Watched by no warder save some rash indifferent gull,  
Here at your rock-edge a tribute pen I offer,  
Vowed long since to you and yours, if rusted now and dull  
Rough, very rough, hath been your children's nurture,  
Helped by no shelter, no balmy Zephyrs blest,  
Wild, most wild their mistress, wayward, fierce, bewitching,  
Queen of moods and shadows, tempest-stirring West!

## XI

### A WAVE

Up the long level slope of orbèd earth,  
Comes this great western wave; now its huge crest  
Rims the horizon; now in seeming rest  
Onward it comes; no shallow outward mirth  
Breaks the calm surface, but below our seeing  
Laughs the great heart in ecstasy of being,  
Earth and sky respond. The rock-strewn shore  
Sounds the approach; down falls its gathered might  
Prone on the patient crags and bastions hoar,  
Then dies away under the sunset light,  
Murmuring "My task is ended"; murmuring rest  
To all the echoing caves. And still the night  
Upholds its mantle, and the star-pricked West  
Shines hollow; and the hollow pools are white.

## XII

### YET A LITTLE LONGER

LOUD-VOICED tormentor of this naked land,  
Whelming with cataract floods the patient strand,  
And you, lean rocks, that, lying out to sea,  
In its grey wash slumber eternally,  
I am your comrade for a little space,  
A little longer while God gives me grace,  
While the uplifted arrows hovering stay,  
And night and day for me *are* night and day.  
A few more months or years, and yon vast sea  
Whose tides know nought of personality,  
Engulf me; Me! beside whose deeps you stand  
Like the least lakelet of yon lake-strewn land.  
I am so rare, so strange, nor faun nor fay  
Can match me, yet my tale is "every-day,"  
Almost too slight to utter! Meanwhile we  
Watch these late hours together silently.

### XIII

#### EVENING

THEY are walking, our dim ones, to-night, to-night,  
Grey over grey, greyest spirits all  
Secret and silent their footsteps fall,  
Yet what they but whisper I've guessed aright.

And the birds know it too, each gull and each tern  
Sea-swallows skimming the sunset rocks,  
Bird after bird in fast following flocks  
Homeward wheeling, they pause to learn.

Then away to the West, where the light has gone,  
And the sea rolls dumbly, the night comes on.

FROM A WESTERN SHOREWAY



I

THE SHADOW ON THE SHORE

A SPOT there is on this far-reaching bay  
Where sleeps a shadow heavier than night,  
A shadow of unmitigated gloom,  
The undying presence of a bygone doom,  
Streaked with no ray of light.

The place is fair; its white-capped wavelets gay;  
Across its sand-bars the pied shadows play,  
And thorn-trees, bent beneath their harvests fair,  
Scatter tart fragrance to the brine-filled air.  
Yet over all there hangs a sense of doom,  
A shadow of impenetrable gloom,  
Some leaden taint, which haunts it like a tomb.

Vanish ill-haunted spot! Which brings to birth  
Visions so baneful; dreams which only come  
After too many lonely hours where  
The thick-strewn shadows, aliens from the sun,  
Leave cold and bare  
The untended bones of Mother Earth;  
Where Joy runs leaping never, nor young Mirth  
Nor Love, nor aught that is heart-whole and fair;  
Only old Desolation and sick Care  
Sit sorrowing. Where the brine-crustured shore  
Slopes to a wrinkled sea-line, scattered o'er  
With thin grey flakes of pale and orphaned foam,  
Flicked by the jealous gusts from their own wave-filled Home.

Kind hearth you call; I come! The night is rough,  
The skies inhospitable; morose this strand;

## THE SHADOW ON THE SHORE

I will not, nay I dare not longer be  
Where Peace, hard-pressed, strains at a nerveless hand.  
And peace, fierce ghosts, to thee!  
Are there not on these lone hills graves enough?  
Is there not space in yonder dark-hued sea?  
In yon grey mist-swept shore even for ye?  
Behold the dusk brings comfort. On yon height  
One silvery hovering gleam of watery light.  
Sea, shore, and all these naked uplands wear  
That wild wan look, that mute appealing air,  
That smile—born of young Hope and old Despair—  
Which Eiré's world-wide lovers find so fair.  
Oh, woman-country, weak, yet strangely strong,  
What witchery doth to thy cold skies belong,  
What spells are thine, all other lands apart,  
Which cling so closely, madly to the heart?  
Is it such wandering ghosts as hover here,  
Or thine own tireless dreams that keep thee young and dear?



## II

### A BOG-FILLED VALLEY

SICK little valley, meted out for sadness,  
Bent thorn-trees sparsely above your brown floods rise,  
Brimming full your streams are, brimming full, yet holding  
Little joyous commerce with the sun and skies.

Sadly in the night-time the moon, besieged by shadows,  
Over your dark hollows holds her pallid court;  
Scarce an evening flower lighting for her pleasure,  
Scarce a silvery ripple dancing for her sport.

Yet, oh little valley, little bog-filled valley,  
I, who linger near you, grieving turn to part,  
In your bareness finding, in your sadness seeing,  
Something very tender, very near my heart.

Turning with reluctance, often I look backwards,  
Seeing, feeling, counting what hath been before,  
Finding in your bareness, seeing in your sadness,  
That which, going elsewhere, I shall find no more.

### III

#### A MIDNIGHT VISION

A GREY peak, naked as some sharp-edged cloud,  
Splintering the smooth breast of a placid sky,  
Rough to the hand, it charms the tired eye;  
Small tufts of sea-pink round its basement crowd,  
A tide beneath, that mounts and tumbles by  
In monstrous wrinkles, each ten cubits high.  
Around a ship-less, sail-less wilderness,  
On high, with arms outstretched as in distress,  
Cutting the lone grey sky, one broken cross—

. . . . .  
—Say, long since seen, long-vanished sign of grace,  
Man's needs, man's sorrows, why from thy dim height  
Thy most austere, remote, abiding place,  
Steal'st thou, grey ghost, to visit me to-night?

## IV

### VAGRANTS

MAGICIAN of the labouring brain,  
Shepherd who herds a wandering train,  
The flocks which bring us joy or pain;

Whose tramlings fill this mortal span—  
—Wild vagrant thoughts that bless or ban  
The little wayward mind of man—

What hand doth their wild march control?  
Heed'st *Thou*, contriver of the Whole,  
Such idle tenants of the soul?

Wild birds which flutter to and fro,  
Misled, misguided barques which go  
'Cross currents streaked with weal and woe?

Propelled by gusts from shore to shore,  
With senseless runes bedabbled o'er,  
Known for a while, then seen no more.

Can such light things deserve one tear?  
Be harbingers of Hope or Fear?  
We know not. This alone we hear,

In waves, in dreams across yon sea,  
Some faint voice sighs—"Infinity."  
No less, no more, naught else know we.

Only for ever through the brain  
Flit on and ever on that train,  
The thoughts which bring it peace—or pain.

V

A SPHINX

WHAT are your thoughts, wild Dreamer from of old?  
Who shall foreknow thy dark and devious way?  
What hand dare limn in colours grey or gold  
The close-furled puzzle of thine unborn day?  
As in its first chill early glimmering morn  
Some simple prophet cons the coming year,  
Tells all its warm days, measures tear by tear  
Its rainfall—and is laughed by it to scorn!—  
So we by you, oh green and sea-worn sphinx,  
Loved so profoundly, named of many names,  
Heart-breaking goal of he that loves, that thinks,  
Founded on treasons, sorrows, glories, shames!

## VI

### A PARALLEL

DEEP in this gorge the sullen waters roll,  
Over my head the clouds in black array,  
Sweep their long skirts round the converging whole  
While hostile eve succeeds to hostile day;

Yet here in sight

One dauntless wavelet of this gloom-struck lake

Catches the light,

Resists the night,

And the whole scene grows living for its sake.

From early dawn through ever-darkening years  
Clouds black as night have thickened in men's sight,

Yet undismayed by caitiff doubts and fears,

Some still hope on, some still for honour fight.

Oh gallant toilers in a desperate cause,

Fain would I see

The shadows flee,

Light grow round ye

Who, great of heart ! labour without applause.

## VII

### MEMORIES

PAINTER of Painters,  
Artist of Artists,  
Loving the earliest,  
Holding it tenderly  
Nearest thy breast.  
Giver of colour,  
Form and perception,  
Shapes without number,  
God of the child-world!  
How shall I thank thee,  
Life's benefactor,  
Earliest and dearest?  
When shall thy joys fail?  
Cease to enchant me?  
Cease to soothe sorrow?

. . . . .

Only in Death!

Tenderly, daintily,  
Vividly, cloudily,  
Gleam through the darkness  
These, thy first pictures;  
Odours and tones too,  
Scents of wet seaweed,  
Wings of wild sea-birds,  
Flashes of sunlight,  
Winds from the westward,  
Red streams of sunset,  
Bog-scents and sea-scents,  
Huge domes of cloudland,  
Clattering of rain-drops,  
Rushing and splashing,  
Beating to leeward.

Wild wastes of moorland;  
 Deep pools of colour;  
 Grey tarns and tussocks,  
 Starry blue blossoms;  
 Sheets of bog-myrtle;  
 Odorous with crushing;  
 Grey moths uprising,  
 Ghosts of the heather,  
 Others at eventide,  
 Larger, more splendid,  
 Peering mysteriously;  
 Bats fitting swiftly,  
 Wild storms at midnight;  
 Grey morning wakings;  
 Rushes to seaward;  
 Rides through the wet grass;

Laughter and greetings.  
 Up on the heights too,  
 Ancient grey ruins,  
 —Hoary, so hoary—  
 Toppling and perilous,  
 From whose high ramparts  
 Spreads like a deluge,  
 Endless as Chaos,  
 Spreads to the uttermost,  
 Wastes of grey water;  
 Wakening the child-brain,  
 Rousing its visions—  
 —Dreams of the measureless  
 Hints of the boundless,  
 Breaths of the Infinite,  
 Soul of God's world!

Oh, mighty artist!  
 Life's benefactor,  
 Earliest and dearest,  
 When shall thy joys fail?  
 Cease to enchant me?  
 Cease to soothe sorrow?

. . . . .  
 Only in Death.



## VIII

### EMIGRANTS

LIKE sea-pools on some restless, rock-strewn shore  
These bog-pools flutter ere they sink to rest,  
And o'er this surface, level as a floor,  
Yon blue reek trails its idle way to west.  
It comes from thee, brown shieling, late bereft  
Of thy last fledgelings; tenement outworn,  
Long marked for desolation, and now left  
To two old hearts, submissive, but forlorn.

How like some wintry nest it shows to-night;  
While over its bent thatch a young curved moon  
Peers through thin clouds scarce greyer than her light  
Peers wistfully, as if arrived too soon,  
Or doubtful of her welcome. While I stand  
A string of wild duck speeds across her horn,  
Six, seven, eleven—Oh adventurous band!  
Westward you stream, due west, and now are gone.

Gone! Gone! They leave us! Yet the brown pools there  
Still dance and flutter in this crisping wind,  
And still the blue reek gaily mounts to where  
That new-born moon, so timid, yet so kind,  
Peers earthward, as if curious to mark  
A scene less often honoured of the sun.  
Slowly the shadows lengthen, while the dark  
Grows deeper; and another day is done.



WIDE IS THE SHANNON



## WIDE IS THE SHANNON

WIDE is the Shannon, very wide and spacious,  
Wild is the Shannon, home of every gale,  
Dull is the Shannon, leagues of open water,  
Leagues of open water, scarce a single sail.  
Tawny brown wavelets, sea-salt and white-tipped,  
Rolling in for ever, streaming from the west,  
Meeting with the current, beaten back, embracing,  
Salt and fresh commingling in one grey and troubled breast.

River-way or sea-way, by what name we call you,  
Little recks the trader of your wealth of idle waves.  
Tiny rivers mock you, reckoning up their navies,  
Skiff, and barge, and wherry, busy plying slaves;  
East and west I view you, ever greyly speeding,  
Home and vacant playground of the idle, wind-torn clouds,  
Wastes of roving darkness, streaks of glowing brightness,  
Dusky depths of shadowland, hid in scrolling shrouds.

Steeplly the meadows slip down to your pebbles,  
Battered elm and thorn-tree shoulder rock and ledge,  
Here a sudden curve, tender green, beswitching,  
There a bare and barren stretch, void of tree or hedge.  
Swift fly the shadows, darting down the reaches,  
Cloud-races run on a wide aerial course;  
Lights born and fading on your solitary vastness,  
Shining but to bring to light some fading patch of gorse.

Ancient battered oaks, sere, and bald and sapless,  
Through their lichened branches your current twists and heaves,  
Mossy green or olive, the sheeny ripples glitter,  
Smooth as polished agate betwixt the bristling leaves.

Little flitting creatures, dragon-fly or day-moth,  
Sipping at your waters mount in small alarms,  
Start to fly across you, fly and fly for ever,  
Beaten back and dying in your bitter, sea-cold arms.

Off away to seaward, where you spread your widest,  
Clare leans out to meet you, stretches forth an arm,  
Infinitely lonely, desolately stony,  
Scarce a waving sky-line, scarce a field or farm.  
Swift the nimble Fancy leaps that narrow rampart,  
Lands upon the further side with blithe and beating breast,  
Looks around and onward, clapping hands and hailing  
All the light and glory of the living, moving West !

Ho ! the living West, with its moving, moving, waters !  
Ho ! the golden West, where the sunsets dance and play  
Limits hath it never, rolling on for ever  
To the never-fading sun-fields, the Motherlands of day.  
Out of it comes freshness, out of it comes gladness,  
In it sleep the breezes that set the soul awhirl,  
Hope and all enchantments, Love the wily wizard,  
Memory with her deep caves, and open gates of pearl.

Therefore idle Shannon, spendthrift amongst rivers,  
Poures forth of treasure to the waste indifferent night,  
Love we you, and cherish, bringer to our thresholds  
Harsh and bitter weather—melody and light.  
High road to bewitchment, open gate of sunset,  
Strewn with restless fires, with islands of the blest,  
From whose steel-grey bosom spreads as from a mirror  
Light and lovely colour, the wild wealth of the West.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ECHOES



## THE AWAITED LEADER

### I

“WHEN is he coming? We have watched since morning,  
We weary of this waiting; night grows late,  
The winds are very bleak, the skies untender,  
Our faith grows chill; of what avail to wait?  
Long have we hoped, long sought, and long attended,  
Caught at false shadows which misled our love.  
Say, is he coming? He our souls' desire,  
Sworn to conduct us to the heights above?”

“How can I tell you? Do I not wait likewise?  
Have I not also watched the dull hours glide;  
Have I not wearied of this stagnant shore-line  
Washed by one dark and never-varying tide?  
Are not my seed-plots, like your own, untended;  
With dock and ragweed filled from side to side,  
With bristling chardocks, thistles, nettles, burdocks,  
Lost in their tense and tangled maze I bide.

“This much I know. In all this dreary prospect  
There is no spot so barren, bald, or dun,  
No weedy grassland, no neglected hillside,  
Unused by man, unfostered by the sun,  
No, not one puny, mud-banked, stagnant streamlet  
O'er which at dusk the meanest insects hum,  
But will shine out a very star in splendour  
When he at last, the long-desired, shall come.

“Do you then purpose to abide his coming  
On this bleak ridgeway, watching from afar,



## THE AWAITED LEADER

Wearing your soul out in a fruitless longing,  
Like one who waits to espy some unborn star?  
No, for I weary, and to sleep is pleasant,  
I shall await him on the shadowy strand,  
No need to warn me! I shall feel him coming,  
Thrilling the deep heart of this buried land."

## II

### THE GAMBLERS

IN our reckless early days,  
In the glad and mad spring weather,  
We gambled, he and I,  
And laid our stakes together.

*I have nothing now to lose,  
Of what once belonged to me,  
Save the grass above my graves,  
And my graves beside the sea.*

In those light and frolic days  
I met all loss with scorn,  
For my purse was full of hope,  
And the world shone bright at morn.

*I have nothing now to lose,  
Of what once belonged to me,  
Save the grass above my graves,  
And my graves beside the sea.*

I have thrown my latest stake,  
No niggard was I born,  
He has swept his winnings in,  
And repays me with his scorn!

*I have nothing, nothing left,  
Of what once belonged to me,  
Save the grass above my graves,  
And my graves beside the sea.*

### III

#### A FAMINE CRY

OH skeleton with the hungry jaw,  
Corpse-snatcher, armed with tooth and claw,  
Not satiate yet? Thy lustful maw?

Eiré, to *you* our love we gave,  
Our mother-mistress, now our grave,  
Be pitiful for once, and save!

My heart hath grown a very clod,  
Stone-bound, unfruitful as this sod;  
I ask and ask—"Is there a God?"

Eiré, to *you* our love we gave  
Our mother-mistress, now our grave,  
Be pitiful for once and save!

#### IV

#### GONE !

HE wanted a trifle of freedom,  
A trifle of breathing space,  
Room for a man to stand in,  
Room for a living race.

Pent and stifled, and thwarted,  
Prisoned from sea to sea,  
God to him has been gracious—  
Burst are his bonds, he is free !

Now may you read his story  
On the face upturned to the sky;  
“ A young man sick of living,  
And a strong man glad to die ! ”

## V

### WISHES

I WOULD I were you, you scaly fish, swim-swimming in the sea,  
Or a fox upon the hillside there, a hunter bold and free,  
Anything but the man I am, crying, dear God, to thee!

I would I were you, you black sea-weed, toss-tossing on the sea,  
Or you, or you, grey lumps of stone, which feel no misery—  
I pray you make me as these, dear God, since better may not be!

VI

TO A WOMAN SPINNING

How poor thou art, and yet thou art not poor.  
    Oh peaceful spinner!  
Ragged and barefoot, sitting at thy door,  
    Thou art the winner!  
Thine eyes are placid, as to-day the sea,  
    Thrice happy spinner!  
Content on her best cates hath nourished thee,  
    A royal dinner!  
At bed and board she serves thee on her knee,  
    Oh queenly spinner!  
Would that such service she would lend to me,  
    Heart-broken sinner!

## VII

### SPAIN

YOUR sky is a hard and a dazzling blue,  
Your earth and sands are a dazzling gold,  
And gold or blue is the proper hue,  
You say for a swordsman bold.

In the land I have left the skies are cold,  
The earth is green, the rocks are bare,  
Yet the devil may hold all your blue and your gold  
Were I only once back there !



## VIII

### SPAIN: A DRINKING SONG

MANY are praised, and some are fair,  
But the fairest of all is *She*,  
And he who misdoubts let him have a care,  
For her liegemen sworn are we!  
Then Ho! for the land that is green and grey,  
The land of all lands the best,  
For the South is bright and the East is gay,  
But the sun shines last in the West,  
    The West!  
The sun shines last in the West!

A queen is she, though a queen forlorn,  
A queen of tears from her birth.  
Ragged and hungry, woeful and worn,  
Yet the fairest Fair on the earth.  
Then here's to the land that is green and grey,  
The land of all lands the best!  
For the South is bright, and the East is gay,  
But the sun shines last in the West,  
    The West!  
The sun shines last in the West!



## AFTERWORD



## AFTERWORD

Out of the dusk of slow-accomplished Time,  
Out of the shadows, out of the long past,  
Lifting that past up on thy haughty rhyme,  
Wakening those silenced voices, heard at last;  
Fierce with the tumults of eight hundred years,  
Loud with their cries of echoing strife and scorn;  
Soft with their woes; child of their hopes and fears,  
Poet we look for, come; awake! Be born!

Our little life fills out its little round,  
Our little pipes play on their puny strains.  
We grope, we fumble on the dusky ground,  
Still searching, hoping, for some scattered grains.  
Stammering weak ditties on an alien strand,  
Babbling poor plaintive notes, which sink forlorn,  
We sport; we toy. The theme demands *thy* hand,  
Poet we look for, come; awake! Be born!

Sing as thou must. Sing in what tongue thou wilt,  
So thou make plain that tale to every ear,  
Uplifting all its sorrow, pity, guilt,  
For friends and foes, or friends once foes, to hear,  
Till every shore washed by the encircling sea,  
From eve's first portal to the gates of morn,  
Echoes that voice, and takes its tone from thee.  
Poet we look for, come; awake! Be born!

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